

# Trump impeachment: House must act now to keep our Republic

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Learn the laws, steps and votes needed in the Presidential impeachment process. An earlier version of this video incorrectly identified one of the president's who was impeached. USA TODAY

*There are many uncontested facts that suggest Trump is an extraordinary threat to our democracy and constitutional order. We see no reason for delay.*



(Photo: Mike Nelson, epa)

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The Constitution provides that “the House of Representatives shall have the sole power of impeachment” and that “The president ... shall be removed from office on impeachment for ... high crimes and misdemeanors.”

The House Judiciary Committee, when it considered articles of impeachment against former president Richard Nixon in 1974, addressed the question of what constitutes a

“high crime” or “misdemeanor.” Such impeachable offenses need not be limited to criminal acts, a staff report concluded, but should include “[constitutional wrongs](#) that subvert the structure of government, or undermine the integrity of office and even the Constitution itself, and thus are ‘high’ offenses.”

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Six Democrats have introduced articles of impeachment against President Donald Trump, a long-shot effort that stands little chance in the Republican-led House. The five articles include accusing the president of obstruction of justice. (Nov. 15) AP

Several of President Trump’s actions since taking office meet this high standard. They were not simply inappropriate or wrong; they threaten to undermine our fundamental constitutional structure, our national security and our democracy. In light of this, we have introduced five [articles of impeachment against Trump](#) and called for immediate impeachment hearings.

The articles address a range of Trump’s actions, from obstruction of justice and violations of the Constitution’s foreign and domestic emoluments clauses to undermining the independence of the federal judiciary and the freedom of the press.

We recognize that several investigations are ongoing, including one led by special counsel Robert Mueller into Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election and possible collusion with the Trump campaign. We support a continuation of these efforts to ensure complete transparency and accountability. Sufficient facts, however, already exist in the public record to warrant the start of impeachment proceedings in Congress. Given the magnitude of the constitutional crisis engendered by Trump’s actions, we see no reason for delay.

For example, with regard to obstruction of justice, we already know that [Trump fired former FBI director James Comey](#) while the bureau was investigating potential collusion between Russia and the Trump campaign, and the president has already admitted on national television that he had the [Russia investigation on his mind](#) when he fired Comey. We also already know that [Donald Trump Jr. met with a Russian attorney](#) who offered to provide damaging information about Hillary Clinton as part of the Russian government’s efforts to help his father’s campaign. These facts are uncontested.

Similarly, uncontroverted facts support the charge that the president has violated the foreign and domestic emoluments clauses. Unlike all of his modern predecessors, Trump has refused to [release his tax returns](#) or to divest his assets or place them into a [blind trust](#). As a result, foreign governments and even the United States government, have spent thousands of dollars at Trump-branded properties in which Trump continues to have an ownership interest. The framers of our Constitution wisely prohibited presidents from accepting these kinds of payments to protect against their potentially corrupting influence.

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Consider that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reportedly [paid \\$270,000](#) to the Trump International Hotel in Washington, D.C., as part a lobbying effort, and the [Embassy of Kuwait](#) held an event there estimated at somewhere between \$40,000 and \$60,000. Domestically, Trump's repeated visits to Trump-branded properties in which he retains an ownership interest have caused the federal government to spend money at his businesses, including at least \$137,000 by the [Secret Service for golf carts](#) and more than \$1,000 for just [two nights of lodging at Mar-a-Lago](#) by the National Security Council.

There is also already a well-established record of Trump actions that undermine the independence of the federal judiciary and the freedom of the press. For example, his [pardon of former Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio](#) for criminal contempt of court is a matter of public record, as is his tweet criticizing a "[so-called judge](#)" who had overturned his executive order banning refugees from certain Muslim-majority nations. And it is also public record that the president circulated a video of himself violently [wrestling a man covered by a CNN logo](#). Many more facts support the president's impeachment.

To be clear, we are highly sensitive to the fact that impeachment may result in overturning the results of a democratic election. Yet the Constitution's framers provided for this extraordinary remedy to allow the people's representatives to confront extraordinary threats to our democracy and constitutional order posed by the actions of federal officeholders, including the president. When Benjamin Franklin was asked at the conclusion of the Constitutional Convention what kind of government the framers had established, he responded, "A Republic, [if you can keep it](#)."

It is time for the House to rise to the challenge and begin an impeachment inquiry.

*Steve Cohen of Tennessee, Luis Gutierrez of Illinois, Al Green of Texas, Marcia Fudge of Ohio and Adriano Espaillat of New York are Democratic members of the House.*

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